



Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Robert Louis Stevenson

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers® 1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Robert Louis Stevenson
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Robert Louis Stevenson,
Dates:	July 7, 2007
Bulk Dates:	2007
Physical Description:	6 Betacam SP videocassettes (2:54:20).
Abstract:	Film hairstylist Robert Louis Stevenson (1944 -) is an Emmy Award-winning Hollywood hairstylist who has worked exclusively with Richard Pryor and Samuel L. Jackson. His film credits include "A Time to Kill," "Which Way Is Up?," "Jackie Brown," and "Coming to America." Stevenson was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on July 7, 2007, in Los Angeles, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2007_197
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Film hairstylist, Robert Louis Stevenson, was born on April 20, 1944 in Louisville, Kentucky. Stevenson was raised in South Central Los Angeles, California and was the oldest of twelve children. He attended Jordan High School and enrolled in Compton College in 1963. Stevenson was drafted into The United States Military in 1965 during the Vietnam War and was unable to complete his undergraduate education. In the military Stevenson spent two years in Korea and eleven months in Oklahoma. Following his tour of duty, he trained at Flavio School of Beauty.

Stevenson began his hairstyling career in 1971 working on the NBC television series "McMillan and Wife." In 1976, Stevenson began working as Richard Pryor's hairstylist for the film "Car Wash," and he continued as Pryor's hairstylist for the films "Greased Lightning" and "Which Way Is Up?." Stevenson served as head of the hair department on several other films and television shows in the late 1970s and 1980s, including "The Fish That Saved Pittsburgh," "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," "The Toy" and "Superman III." In 1985, Stevenson was nominated for an Emmy Award for Outstanding Achievement in Hairstyling for the Miniseries, "The Atlanta Child Murders," and he won an Emmy Award for Outstanding Achievement in Hairstyling for "The Jesse Owens Story" that same year. In 1988, he worked as head of the hair department on Eddie Murphy's film, "Coming to America." In 1993, Stevenson was nominated again for an Emmy Award for Outstanding Individual Achievement in Hairstyling for a Miniseries or Special for "The Jacksons: An American Dream." Stevenson has worked personally with Lawrence Fishburne and Angela Bassett. He also served as Samuel L. Jackson's hairstylist on several films including "1408," "Home of the Brave," "Black Snake Moan," "Snakes on a Plane," "Freedomland," "XXX: State of the Union," "The Man," "Coach Carter," "In My Country," "S.W.A.T.," "Basic," "Formula 51," "Changing Lanes," "Unbreakable," "Shaft," "Rules of Engagement," "The Negotiator," "Eve's Bayou," "Jackie

Brown" and "The Long Kiss Good Night." In addition, Stevenson has been a department head or supervising hairstylist on many memorable films including "Jarhead," "Three Kings," "Amistad," "Waiting to Exhale," "Dangerous Minds," "What's Love Got to Do With It?," "Sister Act," "The Color Purple," "Flashdance" and "Willie Dynamite."

Stevenson has been married for thirty years to film publicist Rosalind Stevenson. They have four adult children and five grandchildren.

Robert Stevenson was interviewed by "The HistoryMakers" on July 7, 2007.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Robert Louis Stevenson was conducted by Ron Brewington on July 7, 2007, in Los Angeles, California, and was recorded on 6 Betacam SP videocassettes. Film hairstylist Robert Louis Stevenson (1944 -) is an Emmy Award-winning Hollywood hairstylist who has worked exclusively with Richard Pryor and Samuel L. Jackson. His film credits include "A Time to Kill," "Which Way Is Up?," "Jackie Brown," and "Coming to America."

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Persons:

Robert Louis Stevenson

Brewington, Ron (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews
Robert Louis Stevenson--Interviews

African American barbers--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

HistoryMakers® Category:

StyleMakers

Administrative Information

Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Robert Louis Stevenson, July 7, 2007. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 8/9/2011 by The HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage, July 7, 2007

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Louis Stevenson, Section A2007_197_001_001, TRT: 0:29:20 2007/07/07

Robert Stevenson begins the interview by describing his childhood. He was raised in his grandmother's house in Watts, California. He provides details about his family tree. His father, Willis Roddie Stevenson, was born in Louisville, Kentucky and joined The United States Navy at age seventeen. His mother, Christine Stevenson, was born in Louisville, Kentucky, and moved to Los Angeles, California at the age of nineteen. Christine married Willis when she was fifteen years old; from this union there were twelve children, seven girls and five boys, and Robert is the oldest. Stevenson went to school with members of The Whispers, Johnny Ray Peters and Brenda Holiday.

African American children .

Social life and customs--Los Angeles--California

African American parents.

Marriages--African American.

African American families--California--Los Angeles

United States--Navy--African Americans.

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Louis Stevenson, Section A2007_197_001_002, TRT: 0:29:40 2007/07/07

Robert Stevenson continues to share information about his father's side of the family. He has never met his paternal grandparents, or seen any photographs of them. Stevenson recalls his elementary school years at Douglas Elementary School and Corpus Christi Elementary School. He discusses his high school career at Wendell Phillips High School. He worked in a drum manufacturing plant with his father. While working at the plant he was mentored by his father's boss. His family left public housing because his father's income disqualified them. Stevenson's mother died at the age of thirty-three, right after the family bought their first house in Los Angeles, California. His father abandoned the family which caused Stevenson to lose respect for his father. Stevenson begins to work for Douglas Enterprises while he attended beauty school. Shortly after opening his own beauty shop, he was hired by Universal Studios as a hairdresser.

African American Elementary School Students

African American High School Students

African American fathers

Housing projects--California-Watts

Desertion and non-support--California--Los Angeles

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Louis Stevenson, Section A2007_197_001_003, TRT: 0:31:10 2007/07/07

Robert Stevenson describes the experience of living in the projects of Watts, California. He remembers this time fondly; he and the other neighborhood children would go to the beach, The Long Beach Pike, and the watchtowers. Stevenson describes his father as a functioning alcoholic. Due to Willis Stevenson's alcoholism, Stevenson began to dislike his father. His father abandoned the family after his mother suddenly died at the age of thirty-three. Stevenson was drafted into The United States Army; he served for two years and some of this time was spent overseas. While in The United States Army, Stevenson experienced racism as a serviceman. He believes the draft should be reinstated. Stevenson provides his philosophies on race and culture. One of his

best friends talked him into going into hairdressing.

Housing projects--California--Watts

Children of alcoholics--California.

United States--Army--African Americans

Alcoholism--California

California--Watts

African American fathers--California.

Draft--United States

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Louis Stevenson, Section A2007_197_001_004, TRT: 0:29:20 2007/07/07

Robert Stevenson discusses his career choices. He worked as a cook at Los Angeles International Airport, Blue Chip Stamps, Modene Manufacturers, and The Los Angeles Board of Education until he was drafted into the army. He describes opening up his first beauty salon on Crenshaw Blvd. in Los Angeles, California. Stevenson married Gwendolyn Lett in 1965 in Los Angeles, California. He worked in Hollywood, California for three years as an apprentice. The first show Stevenson was a hairstylist on was, "McMillan and Wife," and then he styled on "Ironside". He worked at Universal Studios as a hairstylist from 1969-1977, the first African American male studio hairstylist in Hollywood in 1969, and also the first African American in their union. Some of his other professional engagements include "Kojak" and "The Lucille Ball Show." Stevenson describes the studio hairstylist profession. He shares who some of his professional and personal mentors are.

Beauty shops--California--Los Angeles

African American--Marriage

Universal Studios--Employees.

Hairdressing--Employees--Job descriptions

Hollywood (Los Angeles, Calif.)

Beauty operators, African American--California

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Louis Stevenson, Section A2007_197_001_005, TRT: 0:29:20 2007/07/07

Robert Stevenson discusses how to survive in the Hollywood, California motion picture and television industry. Maintaining a small ego is the key to success in Hollywood. The rumor of Hollywood being glamorous is false; there is a lot of hard work involved. Stevenson shares his opinion of unionized labor. Stevenson and Gwendolyn divorced in 1974. Before they divorced, they had one child, Kendra Stevenson-Ruffin. He met his second wife, Rosalind Woodruff, on the set of the television show "Emergency". He married Rosalind in 1977, from this union they had one son named Teron. Rosalind was one of the first African American publicists in Hollywood, California. Stevenson shares his mentoring principles. He compares his experiences in Africa to race relations in the United States.

Beauty Operators--Hollywood (Los Angeles, Calif.)

Motion picture industry

African American--Divorce

African American--Marriage.

Race relations in the United States

Video Oral History Interview with Robert Louis Stevenson, Section A2007_197_001_006, TRT: 0:25:30 2007/07/07

Robert Stevenson shares his memories of working with Richard Pryor. Having last worked with Pryor on "Harlem Nights," Stevenson describes Pryor as a very kind and generous man. He has worked with some of the biggest names in film, including Robin Harris, Della Reese, Redd Fox and Angela Bassett; Stevenson wants to be remembered as a man that helped others and did a wonderful job hairstyling. He shares some of his unique ways to style lace front wigs. Stevenson is the recipient of three Emmy nominations winning one in 1984 for hairstyling in "The Jesse Owens Story." He retired from hairstyling in 2008. Some of his current ventures include helping the hairstylist unions and volunteering with women cancer patients.

Pryor, Richard

Harlem (New York, N.Y.)--Drama.

Gynecology--Study and teaching.

Emmy Awards

The Jesse Owen's Story (Motion Pictures)

Redd Foxx, 1922-1991